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Lack of Discipline in Cape Verdean Secondary Schools:
The Need to Better Define the Problem and Develop Strategies to
Prevent or Manage the Situation

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“ Discipline is positive. Discipline is training. Teaching and discipline are inseparable.”

- *Jean Fleming*

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ABSTRACT

This research paper has been written with the intention to discuss the problem of discipline in Cape Verdean secondary schools. While many of us discuss the effects that student misbehavior has on the student misbehavior has on the student, school and society as a whole, very few of us seek solutions which would impact on the prevention and management of this problem that each day becomes more complicated and harder to handle.

This paper will discuss the need to better define discipline at the school level; identify the causes and factors that aggravate the problem, in addition, to provide what I hope to be useful strategies to better manage the problem as we make the effort to reclaim our schools and better educate our students.

My research included surveys completed by teachers and student alike as they baffled over the question: what is discipline and how can we better manage discipline problems at our schools?

INTRODUCTION

Discipline problems are issues that concern most schools worldwide, independent of customs and traditions. Like any other school, Cape Verdean schools are no exception.

Over the past seven years I've been listening to teachers, in general, complaining about students' lack of discipline in the majority of our secondary schools and the difficulties they face in solving discipline problems. Who is at fault? Teachers accuse parents of not being able to raise their children at home and parents accuse teachers of not being able to educate their students at school. For example, students misbehaving while riding to school on a bus invoke the question from fellow riders: "What are these children learning at school?" On the other hand, when teachers are confronted with daily discipline problems they ask the fundamental question: "Who are raising these children at home?" Is the underlining question student-education or child rearing? And to what extent is the student himself responsible for his or her own actions?

The nation as a whole is aware and concerned about discipline problems as it affects our society at large. Comments on the street as well as in the teacher's lounge compare education in the past with education nowadays. We complain a lot without offering concrete solutions on how to solve the problem. To this end, I have decided to write a research paper to address discipline problems in the Cape Verdean secondary schools and search for solutions that would assist teachers in improving the level of education in our schools.

But is it only the students' behavior that is in question? When we talk about discipline problems, we usually think about students' behavior; however, many times, administrators and teachers are accomplice, when we fail to put in adequate systems for correction.

This paper argues that the problem of discipline in our secondary schools is a consequence of the lack of a well defined definition and specific strategies to prevent as well as manage the problem.

I have chosen this research topic because I am deeply concerned about the lack of discipline in our schools which appears to be deteriorating. The disintegration of family values in the cultural context creates an environment where teachers inherit parental responsibilities on a stage where teacher authority is continually diminished within the flux of new attitudes, foreign influences and global sanctions via the media. There is a growing sentiment that has resulted from pervasive discipline problems which suggest that teachers have become permissive and are failing at their job. But what is their job as it pertains to the lack of discipline in schools and how best can they do it?

The purpose of this paper is not to present a definitive way to deal with discipline incidents nor to point the finger at anyone; rather, its goal is to suggest a more effective process in preventing and managing discipline in our secondary schools, focusing on better understanding the problem and looking for effective solutions. This includes identifying the principal factors, understanding the causes and recommending strategies to help students become more responsible for their behavior and therefore, help to minimize discipline problems.

To a great extent students, parents, teachers and the administration alike are all responsible for the lack of discipline in our schools and therefore, play an indispensable role in solving the problem. But before we go further, let's define the term discipline.

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Defining Discipline

There are many definitions of “discipline” used by teachers and students. This in itself suggests a problem. If neither teachers nor students agree on what discipline is, how can they work together towards a desired end? If expectations vary without a common point of reference, the term becomes ambiguous and hard to get a handle on. Gilda Neves, a French teacher, who wrote a thesis on “L’ indiscipline en Classe (Lack of Discipline in the Classroom)” is right when she states that “the term discipline needs to be better defined and understood if we are to find specific solutions.” (2004:15)

The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines discipline as “training or control, often using a system of punishment, aimed at producing obedience to rules, SELF-CONTROL, etc.” The American Heritage Dictionary defines discipline as “training that is expected to produce a specific character or pattern of behavior especially training that produces moral or mental improvement.” While both of these definitions are widely used, there is a difference in their emphasis which is important to us as teachers. The first definition explicitly speaks to a causal effect of behavior and its consequences, while the second definition implicitly refers to the process of training towards desirable attributes or values for citizenship; the type of improvement which we want to see in our students.

Kathleen Cotton, author of “Schoolwide and Classroom Discipline” questions if discipline is concerned with preventing misconduct or punishing it. She focuses on the prevention and remediation factors of discipline, adding that, according to The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, discipline can also be “punishment intended to correct or train”. She also quotes Jones, an educational researcher (1979) as

saying that “discipline, most simply stated, is the business of enforcing simple classroom rules that facilitate learning and minimize disruption”; in other words, discipline is a natural process of “educating”. While on the other hand, some educators counter argue this statement and view disciplinary activities as irritating intrusions into school life which should not be necessary. Another educator, Wayson, disagrees by stating that these activities are a natural part of the learning process quoting, educator James Hymes, who defines discipline as “the slow, bit-by-bit, time consuming task of helping children to see the sense in acting in a certain way (2006:2).

Whatever the exact definition and complexity, the concept of discipline in general refers to a universally stipulated and accepted ‘Rules of Conduct’. If it is true that, most of the time these rules are based on moral values, it is also true that when these rules are not respected or obeyed, discipline problems occur. Silva. M. L. refers to the concept created by ESTRELA, (1994:15) when she states that talking about lack of discipline is the same as talking about established, stipulated or negotiated rules which are not respected.

For the purpose of this paper we will define discipline in the classroom context as the business of enforcing class rules that facilitate learning and minimize disruption. Discipline can be seen as part and parcel of the overall learning experience; an integral component that cannot be disassociated from the overall learning experience. Thus, a school education is composite of learning how to be a productive citizen through academic, professional and civic competencies. Discipline is part of the socialization process. It is easy enough to theorize about the effects of discipline; however, in practice, we find that discipline problems and their appropriate responses are sometimes a “hard call”. The dilemma brings us to the root of the problem that teachers face: when is discipline a problem and consequently, what is the correct response?

2. When Discipline Becomes a Problem

Alberto Nunes, Professor and Historian, states in his newspaper article “A Semanonline” that discipline becomes a problem when students’ behavior disturbs the school environment and interferes in the teaching/learning process, adding that it assumes

many forms: for example, classroom noise, which makes difficult the most interested students' learning, or lateness, because each time a student comes late the class' attention is deviated. Another school of thought is offered by Jesus, S (1996:22), shared by Caeiro and Delgado. It defends that lack of discipline can also be manifested by a diversity of student behavior that disrupts. Such behavior includes: exaggerated yawning, making noise, leaving one's seat without permission, arguing with the teacher, fighting, etc". These behaviors can be interpreted differently and may have multiple causes. For example, when a student yawns, is he/she tired? Bored? Hungry or acting out? How does the teacher make a correct call?

3. Differentiating Between Discipline Problems and Miscalls

Professor Howard Seeman, Ph. D,(author of Preventing Classroom Discipline Problems: A Classroom Management Handbook), helps us to differentiate between discipline problems and miscalls, stating that "A discipline problem is a behavior that disrupts the learning of the rest of the class or the role-responsibilities of the teacher." He has been reported to say that the most common problems (...) in high schools are students calling out followed by inattention which leads to note passing and neighbor talking." He links these problems to the lack of training and the teacher's inability to develop and implement motivating lessons.

Here Seeman is questioning who is at fault and looking at the teacher as a causal factor of discipline problems in the classroom. Seemen goes on to say that teachers are rushed to provide solutions to what they perceive to be a discipline problem before correctly analyzing the student's behavior. What results is not distinguishing between discipline and other problematic behaviors and consequently misidentifying the student's behavior. This is known as making a "miscall". Consequently, "miscalls" often aggravate the situation and create negative reactions on the part of the student, thus causing a real discipline problem." D. Sampaio (1997:18) concludes the same and instructs teachers to be careful when identifying discipline problems to ensure that the corrective measures are taken for specific behavior problems. According to Seeman, other types of questionable behavior may fall into the following categories:

- guidance- problems which require individual psychological intervention;
- educational- problems which should be handled through grading or better motivational techniques;
- personal- disruptions that annoy the teacher but are not disruptive to teaching and therefore, not discipline problems.

The above behavioral categories are not all inclusive. In addition, there are many health problems which manifest symptoms of disruptive behavior and continue to be “miscalls”. These include ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), Dyslexia, Learning Disabled, and Turret Syndrome to name a few. More than a behavioral problem that needs psychological intervention, these behavioral conditions are caused by chemical imbalances and must be medically treated. Unfortunately students who have these tendencies are not properly identified or misdiagnosed before they receive proper treatment and care.

The following is an excerpt of an account of a ADHD student taken from the publication TEACHER TALK, The Center for Adolescent Studies, Indiana University, 1996:

“I spent my life in school struggling because of a hidden, often doubted, condition known as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Focusing on the teachers while they were lecturing was nearly impossible. I couldn’t separate the information I was supposed to learn from the other words they said. The clock would catch my attention just as easy as a squirrel outside or a person two rows in front of me tying their shoe. I wasn’t avoiding paying attention, rather I was paying attention to EVERYTHING around me. To top it off, I drove the teachers crazy by tapping my pencil, shifting in my seat, doodling or tapping my leg. Often, I didn’t know I was even doing this. I would talk out or answer questions without raising my hand and generally act impulsively.” (p.1)

This paper does not deal directly with these types of behavior disorders, however the above excerpt demonstrates very vividly how miscalls can be made to the detriment of the student as well as the teacher and class as a whole.

The authors are suggesting that student behavior should not be identified or classified in isolation to the context and environment. Questionable behavior can be a consequence of different motives and factors which if not correctly identified, manifest into a larger problem. Therefore, Sampaio (1997) cautions teachers to: know their students; be flexible in diagnosing their problem; look beyond discipline as a root cause and possibly a consequence of a larger problem., Identifying discipline problems is not an easy task and, therefore, Seeman reminds us that “teachers must make a special effort to identify the problem, deal with it and avoid miscalls.” With this in mind, how do teachers avoid miscalls?

4. Identifying Discipline Problems

In order not to make miscalls and to correctly identify discipline problems for the purpose of correction and not punishment, we need to turn our attention not only to the problem but to the origin of the problem. What is producing the attitude or desire for students to disregard rules and regulations and/or cause disorder? Once we get to the root cause of the behavior in question, we can better work with students to prevent further disruptive behavior. But this takes time as it implies the need to identify the problem within the larger social context, be it: home, community, school environment or the society at large. How is disruptive behavior identified? What is the standard of measurement? Researchers Andrade and Sampaio (1996) agree that not only can there be miscalls at play but at the same time and in the same school an identified discipline problem is often handled differently from class to class, thus confusing the student as to how his/her behavior is being evaluated. According to Caeiro and Delgado in their book Indisciplina em contexto Escolar, they quote Amado and Mateus (2002:57) in stating that there is a lack of discipline (in schools) because established rules concerning classrooms management, norms and values that contribute to a healthy class environment are not

respected. Like many other researchers, they believe that discipline problems are directly tied to social, family and school factors.

5. Major Factors of Discipline Problems

In general, students are educated to increase their knowledge. However, when discipline problems occur they usually interfere with the learning process. Researchers defend that there are multiple causes responsible for lack of discipline. Some factors are linked to students and others are external. (Silva, M.L. 2001:15). Caeiro J. and Delgado P. refer to João Amado's analysis in their publication, Indisciplina em Contexto Escolar, as a four component factor: (1) students, (2) teachers and institutions, (3) family and (4) society. Alberto Nunes, reiterates this in "A SEMANA online" (2006-09-05), by stating that causes of discipline problems can be found in the **family**, **society** and **schools**, adding that all of these are responsible for students' change and transformation. He coins the term *spaces* for these 3 factors which he strongly argues are important for a students' preparation for the future (this includes home training, academic education, and citizenship). Nunes contends that these three *spaces* are interrelated and cannot be disassociated. But to what extent are these factors seen as direct causes of lack of discipline in the classroom?

5.1. Family: Like other researchers, Nunes believes that the family plays an important role in a students' education because the family is the nuclear cell in the teaching/learning process and it is the child's "first place" or cradle of knowledge. A child's first contacts are family and then society. Similar to society and school, the family determines students' behavior, although many people think that school is the only institution that performs this task. He finds this commonly held assumption incorrect and further states that we cannot wait for schools to educate our children. However, according to Nunes, many educational family researchers have come to the conclusion that many families are

not doing their jobs waiting for the school to do it, bringing negative consequences. Another fact that impacts the family space is social-economic and domestic problems.

Here, researchers Delgado and Caeiro paint a picture of the extreme which may reflect the reality of some students.

5.1.2. Problems that impact the family: often times socio-economic problems negatively impact family relations. When students come from dysfunctional families they usually bring their problems with them to school. “For many of these students, they come from families where violence prevails. They are often accustomed to discipline problems being resolved by more violence. Educating them may mean using physical violence or language in detriment of dialogue. Even their gestures and speech patterns speak to violence. As Caeiro and Delgado (pg 17) said in M. T. Estrela (1992), students who come from poor families have problems to understand the linguistic codes which can lead to students’ lack of motivation. But bad attitudes and misbehavior is not only seen in students from less advantaged homes. Students regardless of their background, find their way to the teacher’s office after a bad day or in a bad mood and their teachers become the unwilling recipients of their questionable behavior (Nina M. Koptug, Ph.D., Associate Professor of English, Lyceum #130, Novosibirsk).

Some years ago, when mothers were housewives only, there may have been a stronger or more stable reference of authority in the home. But nowadays both parents are obligated to work away from home leaving the children to raise themselves or seek surrogate parents at school. These unfavorable circumstances can very likely demotivate students and negatively impact their performance at school. If the family environment is not healthy, the student learns to negotiate within the unhealthy environment and acts out these “learned behaviors” in other environments, including school. Be it poor communication, low self esteem, lack of strong parental guidance, neediness or random violence, many students do not differentiate between the home and school environment and try to create the “familiar” at school. Here is where confused lines of authority,

displaced anger and inappropriate conduct translates into a discipline problem. Who is at fault? This is a good question but not the question at hand. The more pertinent question is how to deal with a student in this situation.

5.2. Society: is the second of the three spaces where people learn empirically (first being family). It is also referred to as the “university of life”. Its power to influence people whether in a positive or negative way is determined by one’s surroundings or environment and influenced by such factors as age and individual personality (Nunes, 2006). The media has become a powerful tool in bringing messages and imported values into the privacy of one’s home. The media has taken the place of the more traditional leisure activities such as story telling and has swiftly become the center of attention for both children and adults. People spend many hours in front of the television bombarded with a constant diet of soap operas, action films and music videos. Television and other forms of mass media continue to challenge people’s perception of themselves influencing their values and beliefs. Dr. Carlos E. Cortes, professor emeritus at the University of California at Riverside and acclaimed author and analyst in his speech The Media’s Role in Society spoke about how television and motion pictures influence us both intentionally and unintentionally. He stated that television and movies teach society by providing information. They serve as a ‘gatekeeper’ for information, deciding what gets out and what doesn’t. Isadore Barmash, a veteran businesswoman, journalist and writer for the New York Times for more than 25 years, says that (...) we are losing our values because our values are being manipulated by others with specific, ulterior motives.” But what are some of the direct impacts made by the media on students’ behavior?

5.2.1. Generalization of the Media

One response to this question would be that which The Media Awareness Network: Media and Internet Resources for Teachers and Parents give us when they point out how violence issues are widespread. It states that “Overall, 87.9 % of all violent acts appear before 9 p.m., and 39% air before 8 p.m. at a time when children are likely to be watching. Furthermore, additional research states that violence has not just increased in quantity, but has also become more graphic, more sexual and much more sadistic (...). It

adds that “explicit pictures of slow-motion bullets exploding from people’s chests, and dead bodies surrounded by pools of blood, are now common place fare” and among millions of viewers worldwide, many of them are children (Media Awareness Network, p2). Even the countries that are considered the poorest in the world have access to television. The Media Awareness Network in “Violence in Media Entertainment” stated the following:

“Concerns about media violence have grown as television and movies have acquired a global audience. When UNESCO surveyed children in 23 countries around the world in 1998, it discovered that 91% of children had a television in their home – and not just in the US., Canada and Europe, but also in the Arab states, Latin America, Asia and Africa. More than half (51%) of boys living in war zones and high- crime areas chose action heroes as role models, ahead of any other images; and a remarkable 88% of the children surveyed could identify the Arnold Schwarzenegger character from the film *Terminator*. UNESCO reported that the Terminator “seems to represent the characteristics that children think are necessary to cope with difficult situations. On average, children in the 23 countries surveyed watch television three hours each day, and spend 50% more time watching the small screen than they spend on any other activity outside of school.” (2006:2) Known as the “fourth power” (unknown source), the media has greatly influenced people’s way of thinking and acting. Similarly to movies, our students, mainly teenagers, also watch soap operas identify themselves with the hero/heroine and find themselves imitating them.

5.2.2. Music and music Videos: A great number of teenagers identify themselves nowadays with rap and hip-hop music. If we pay attention to the lyrics we realize that the majority of rap music uses unconventional language. Teens watch these pop artist on television and imitate them as well. Among them is the teen idol Eminem. Media Awareness Network stated the following:

“(…) When the controversial rap artist Eminem came to Toronto in 2000, politicians and activists unsuccessfully called for the government to bar him from the country, on the

grounds that his violent lyrics promoted hatred against women. For instance, his song *KillYou* describes how he planned to rape and murder his mother. In spite of (or perhaps because of) his promotion of violence, Eminem continues to be a commercial success. (...) Eminem's success is not exceptional. Extreme violence has become mainstreamed in the music industry, as an expression of free speech and hip hop culture. The Universal Music Group, which is the world's largest music company lists Eminem and others like Dr. Dre and Limp Bizkit all of whom have been criticized for their violent and misogynist lyrics among its top-grossing artists. (p.4)

We live in a society where students import things from “outside” their own culture, mainly via television. Many times they do not have the slightest notion of what they are imitating nor do they think of the possible impact their behavior has on others. This can be seen from the very innocent of gestures:

- students wearing tee shirts with obscene sayings written on them in a foreign language,
- students memorizing obscene lyrics even though they do not understand its implications,
- students dressing in “fad” clothing to imitate pop cultures when they do not understand the reasons behind the specific form of dress.

When these behaviors demonstrated at school, they transform the school environment and challenge teachers to respond to this subtle yet definite rebellion. Are students' behavior willful rebellious acts disrespecting the school environment or is it just ignorance of the issues surrounding their behavior? This is not the question at hand; the more pertinent question is how do teachers handle this?

5.3. School: After family and society, school is considered to be the third *space* where the majority of boys and girls spend most of their time and lives. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “Everyone has the right to an education (...)” (article 26). In attempt to reduce illiteracy rates, education became a global mandate and in some

situations gave birth to overcrowded schools. Mandatory school attendance continues to be seen by some students as an imposition which leads to lack of interest. (Caeiro and Delgado, 2005:16).

According to Nunes, when students are not educated at home, they bring their problems to schools and schools fail to address these problems because the problems are beyond their scope of intervention. Students come to school with already formed attitudes and preconceived ideas resulting in more pressure on the schools and subsequently schools not even being able to accomplish their own objectives, nor extend themselves to take on the role of family/parents.

Independently of the family and external factors, there are other causes that can negatively influence students in the classroom, inviting them to misbehave. Here we are talking about problems found in the classroom itself. For example, the number of students per class, the seating arrangement, mixed ability classes and sometimes the teacher's lesson plan delivery as well as a general lack of infrastructure. In Cape Verde it is common to find about forty students in the classroom. This number usually interferes with the seating arrangement because most of the times the physical space is not adequate to receive many students. In this situation the teacher has difficulties to paying attention to all of his/her students and, therefore, is unable to identify students who have problems. To compound this situation, it is more than likely that teachers teach mixed ability classes where there is tremendous diversity of student needs. It is almost impossible for teachers to get to know almost all of their students well and this too aggravates the situation.

Discipline is a very complex issue that impacts family, society and school. Interestingly enough these three *spaces* are not only the recipient of students' disruptive behavior but the origin of such behavior.

The next chapter helps us further identify the problem of discipline as it is manifested in Cape Verdean secondary schools. Responses to teacher and students surveys will help us

better understand the gravity of the situation in Cape Verde and how students and teachers feel the problem can be solved.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Discipline is a problem that is not limited to the English classroom only. Therefore, the research questionnaires were directed to teachers and students in general.

The objective of the questionnaire was to receive first hand information on how Cape Verdean teachers/students define discipline and if they view it as a problem in their schools. Respondants were also asked to give suggestions on how discipline problems should be handled. The survey was applied to teachers of three different high schools in Praia (Cesaltina Ramos, Pedro Gomes and Várzea) and other to teachers of a semi-rural high school (Calheta), teaching second and third cycles, as well as students of different levels, belonging to the high schools previously mentioned. I Chose the high school in Calheta in order to see if there was a difference between rural and urban schools in attitude and practice in regard to managing discipline problems.

The teacher and student's questionnaires had similar questions in order to have consistency when comparing the responses. A set of twelve (12) close ended explicit questions were asked to teachers and fourteen (14) to students, providing space for them to qualify their answers. These 12/14 answers were related to the following four major themes:

1. defining discipline
2. identifying discipline incidents and their causes
3. managing discipline
4. general recommendations

The research process, at the beginning, was a bit frustrating, time consuming and challenging! Sometimes I thought that my work would never end. Often times I got stuck because when I thought that everything was okay it was then that I realized that I had to start over from the beginning because of an ambiguous question, repetition or sequencing. I was amazed to see how often a question I had written was entirely irrelevant. Another frustration came from collecting the surveys. Whereas I had a good question response rate, students 100%, teachers 90%, this was mainly due to my running behind many of them to get back the surveys.

Although for the most part, teachers were willing to cooperate, some were unwilling to invest the needed time and attention that the questionnaire demanded. Some teachers told me that they would be happy to cooperate only if the questions were closed ended. I found that, to a degree, I had to compromise with them. However, the students responded more favorably. Ironically, this is greatly due their teachers' assisting me in collecting their questionnaires. I was happy with how the students cooperated with me. I was not expecting them to react so positively; they were so involved that they started sharing ideas then to react to and were excited when giving suggestions with the topic and presenting solutions.

Teachers said that the questionnaire gave them an opportunity to express their opinions on an important issue that needed to be addressed I was happy when the research was finished and I was glad with the results. I believe that my research will serve as a platform for change.

III. Research Analysis

The teacher and student responses to the questionnaires have been analyzed under the fourth major themes stated on page 21. Responses have been juxtaposed in order to show comparison.

1. Defining Discipline. Question #3 from teachers and student questionnaire was analyzed.

<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Students</u>
<p>#3. How do you define discipline? 19 out of 25 . 76% stated that discipline is obeying rules.</p> <p>Other comments included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obeying rules with a certain flexibility • Doing what is right by choice • Upholding values • Following rules that are socially accepted • Mutual coexistence like a pact 	<p>How do you define discipline? 47 out of 68. 69% stated that discipline is obeying rules.</p> <p>(Additional comments were not requested)</p>

Obs: More than three fourths of the teachers agreed with researchers that discipline is obedience to rules. In analyzing their comments they appear to agree that discipline is more of a *process* that is based on values.

2. Identifying Discipline Incidents and Their Causes. Questions #4, #5, #7 and #9 were analyzed from the teachers questionnaire and questions from the students surveys.

<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Students</u>
<p>#4.Are there discipline problems at your school? 19/25. 76% stated sometimes 5/25 20% stated always (1 non respondent)</p>	<p>#4 (a) Are there discipline problems in your school? 47/68. 69% stated sometimes 20/68. 29% stated always 1/68. 2% stated never (2 non respondent)</p>

Causes given were as follows:

- Students have emotional problems
- Learning disabilities
- Problems in adapting
- Problems occur when there are misunderstandings between students, teachers and administrators
- Students bring their personal problems to school
- When teachers are too flexible, students misbehave

(Additional questions were not requested)

Obs: In analyzing the causes given, Seeman would tell us that this teachers are misidentifying discipline problems for other types of behavioral problems, mainly guidance, and health-related behaviors. One teacher also reaffirmed what researcher Nina Koptuyug said, that students often times bring their problems from home to school.

Teachers

#5. Are there discipline problems in your class

21/25. 84% said sometimes

2/25 8% said always

2/25 8% said never

Causes given were as follows:

- Student's immaturity
- Hyperactive behavior problems
- Lack of engaging activities
- Many repeaters in the class

Students

#4 (b) Are there discipline problems in your class?

51/68. 75% said sometimes

11/68. 16% said always

4/68. 6% said never

(3 non respondent)

(Additional comments were not requested)

Obs: More than three fourths of the teachers responded that they face discipline problems in their classes. This is consistent with the response in question #3. It is interesting to see that as many teachers who said that always have discipline problems stated that they never have discipline problems. Here teachers would agree with Seeman that sometimes lack of engaging lessons promote discipline problems. The causes stated above such as repeaters and lack of immaturity point to the problem of mixed classes as per age, experience, etc. Teachers are unable to address of all the challenges that are present in the class.

<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Students</u>
<p>#7. In my class I permit students to use:</p> <p><u>1</u> – rapper and/or thug clothes <u>2</u>- sunglasses <u>5</u>- uncombed hair <u>2</u>- cell phones</p> <p>Teachers appear to be responding to student behavior in very different ways. They explained their attitudes as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they don't see dress as a form of respect • each student has his/her own culture that should be respected • students may be imitating others and this is not forbidden • these behaviors don't interfere with the class functioning well 	<p># 13A. In my class the teachers permit us to use:</p> <p><u>1</u> - dressed inadequately <u>2</u> – sunglasses (sometimes) <u>3</u>- uncombed hair <u>4</u>- cell phones <u>5</u>- wearing caps <u>6</u> – using walkman or Mp3</p>
<p>Obs: Student and teacher responses were similar; however, students reported more information than teachers. These are classic responses to what Sampaio referred to when he stated that “ <i>an identified discipline problem is often handled differently from class to class, thus confusing the students as to how his or her behavior is being evaluated.</i>” Although the numbers were small representing those teachers who allowed the above mentioned behavior, it is those exceptions to the rules that confuse students as to what is acceptable.</p>	

<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Student</u>
<p>#9 Normally students are misbehaved due to the following: The highest number of responses were given to the following comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • negative attitudes learned from “society” which are brought to 	<p>#6. Why do students misbehave?</p> <p>Causes given were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of parent/teacher support , guidance, counseling and foreign cultural influence

school	●lack of home training
● large classes	●imitating others and immaturity
● non-authoritative administration	● lack of engaging activities
● lack of recreational space	● family problems and domestic violence
● non-authoritative teachers	● they do not like certain school subjects
● influence from movies and the media	●the school director is too flexible and
● students have too much free time on their hands	●students are not treated in the same way
● teachers who behave unprofessionally	●unmotivating classes
● mixed aged, mixed level classes and classes and repeaters	●negative influences from society and domestic violence

Obs: Many of the teacher /student responses were similar if not, identical. In analysis, teachers agree with the researchers who feel that family, society and school have a powerful influence on students within their proper spaces. These influences, be it media, poor home training, or problematic classes, negatively affect the students ability to respond in a responsible way in relation to his or her being responsible for his/her behavior. One teacher went on to say that he believes that parents have delegated the responsibility of child rearing to school and teachers. This argument was raised by Nunes who stated that parents are relegating their responsibilities to the schools who are finding it hard if not impossible to meet their own responsibilities to the storns.

3. Preventing and Managing discipline problems: Questions # 6 and #10

<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Student</u>
#6. How do you manage discipline problems in your class?	Students were not asked this question. See General Recommendations for similar responses.
Of the seven suggestions given teachers responded as follows:	
84% talk to the student after class in private	
40% ask students to leave the classroom without penalty	
36% ask students to leave the class with penalty	
36% report student to the Discipline board	
28% show discontent by gestures or facial expressions	

24% arrange a meeting with
parents/guardians

Obs: Some teachers differ in opinion on how discipline problems should be addressed. Some are traditional and work within the system while others consider themselves more enlightened and would impose other sanctions on the students or none at all. This results in mixed messages, non-uniform treatment and mixed messages. While we are not advocating that all teachers should think and act alike, there should be a standard of reference when determining how to manage discipline problems.

Teacher	Student
<p>#8. What do you usually do to prevent or minimize behavior problems in the classroom?</p> <p>Of the five suggestions given teachers responded as follows:</p> <p>68% discuss with students their rights and responsibilities</p> <p>60% stipulate rules from the beginning but allow students to give their input</p> <p>56% reinforce rules from the beginning of the school year</p> <p>48% inform student about school regulations</p> <p>28% change student's seating</p>	<p>(This question did not pertain to students)</p>
<p>Obs: The majority of the teachers thought it important to dialogue with the students and make sure they were aware of school regulations. See chapter on Prevention and Management.</p>	

4. General Recommendations: Questions #11 was analyzed.

<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Student</u>
<p>#11. If you were the director what would you do to minimize discipline problems?</p> <p>Teacher responses included the following:</p>	<p># 14. If you were the director, what would you do to minimize discipline problems?</p> <p>Students responses included the following:</p>

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write school regulations for both students and teachers and have them become familiarized with them • Have more dialogue with parents and guardians • The administration should be known and valued for its effective work and not just its position of authority • Open communication by meeting with students, especially those exhibiting troubled behavior • Create more recreational spaces • Institute penalty and rewards system for both student behavior • Be a good role model of discipline, civics, morale and professional ethics • Have students, teachers and parents share tasks and responsibilities to improve the level of discipline within the school community • Develop a system to deal with behavior problems that support and compliment school rules • Occupy students free time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would not hide problems because they are families or students' friends but try to solve them • Identify people at the school gate • Bring policemen to school • Build an education center to educate students who are delinquents • Forbid Thugs entrance • Ask teachers to be more severe with students • Do not allow the entrance of students that are not well dressed • Be closer to students and try to know the reasons of students' misbehavior in order to help them • Promote meetings with students and teachers at least twice a month and listen to their worries • Punish the perpetrators by giving them work to do at school, like cleaning bathrooms, washing glasses, etc • Be patient with the students • Expel the ones who misbehave • Occupy students' free time with activities • Not to allow students who are 18 years old in ninth and tenth grades • Suspend or expel students who misbehave • Give individual attention to students who have problems • Make students follow and obey the rules • Survey the teachers • Pay attention to the teachers who allow students to cheat • Award students that behave well • Provide students with a well equipped library and would give more incentive to teachers • Promote seminars and workshops on moral and civics |
|--|---|

Obs: Student and teachers' responses were similar. This suggests that there is less of a "gap" between the two. If this is true, a workable solution is at hand. It is apparent that

teachers are aware of not only the lack of discipline in their schools but the fact that there are not adequate measures in place to address the problems. The recommendations given were very direct and useful. Many teachers echoed the same suggestions which implies that even though the problem exist Teachers feel that there are viable solutions at hand to change the situation for the better. See chapter on Recommendations: Preventing and Managing Discipline Problems

Summary: Both teacher and student responses point to the fact that there is not a working definition for discipline present in the school environment. It is therefore understandable why some teachers stated that they do not have a discipline problem in their classes and others stated that they do – these teachers are more than likely defining discipline differently. Researchers say that even the most experienced and conceited teachers have discipline problems in the classroom. However, it is very positive to note that both teachers and students shared similar responses which suggest that together, they can solve their problems. Surprisingly, students showed that independent of age and grade level, they proved that they are mature and can recommend measures that speak to being well informed and responsible. It was gratifying to read that the students themselves were requesting increased security. They do not want the element of “Thugs” in their school. This is thus the reason why there was no comparison between different high schools where the questionnaires were applied, be them urban or semi-rural because the answers are similar. The surveys proved that all the high schools surveyed have discipline problems and the fact that students who live in a semi-rural area do not see the situation very different from urban students.

To address the many concerns voiced in this chapter I have provided recommendations for managing and preventing discipline problems in chapter IV.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

After trying to define lack of discipline, learning to identify the major causes of discipline problems, trying to differentiate lack of discipline from a miscall, it is also our interest to share with the reader recommendations that can help prevent and manage discipline problems.

Preventive measures are preferred because it suggests that there is away to avoid serious discipline problems at school. To this end, I have included recommendations that focus on “positive” behavior, incentives and reinforcements. However, where discipline problems already exist, it is imperative that all “players” (students, teachers , administrators and parents /guardians put in place remedies that would decrease the level of discipline problems while at the time introduce some of the preventive measures to work from both ends, correcting misbehavior and encouraging good behavior.

1. Preventing Discipline Problems

As seen in our schools daily routine, one of the best tools for preventing discipline problems is a good classroom management. Who has never heard the proverb “Prevention is better than cure?” However, the key prevention of inappropriate behavior according to the Red Rose School is to build a positive classroom environment which involves threading together many different strands in our relationship. As Seeman says in a Wire Side Chat, “Miscalls and a failure to learn prevention strategies for real discipline problems are the most common mistakes teachers make. He adds that preventing discipline problems is vital exemplifying that “It’s better to learn why the barn door opened than to keep working on how to get the horse back.” But how can teachers manage the classroom effectively knowing that problems have been increasing, they are many and so complex?

Caeiro and Delgado points out that Arends, R., (1995:19) when he states that one of the ways of preventing discipline problems is through an anticipate planning of rules and procedures.

However, as a teacher I learned that it is important to try not to impose rules to the students; on the contrary, we should involve them in the process, giving them a sense of ownership and commitment to maintaining the rules. The red Rose School advises us to start by rights, then duties and responsibilities and later, discuss with them the consequences.

All of these writers are right in their statements and if we want to make this successfully, one of the first steps is to put into practice the following, as suggested by Mackenzie:

- Good Classroom Management: Contrary to what many people think, the teacher does not transmit knowledge only. He /she also transmits moral values. Moreover, a teacher performs many tasks at the same time; although considered a difficult job, not everyone has the privilege of having many jobs at the same time: a teacher is a friend, a mother/father, a doctor, a psychologist, a judge, a referee, a moderator, a confidant...Nevertheless, independently of age, sex, and experience/ training, "...all teachers even those with effective classroom management plans, will encounter occasional discipline incidents" (Dr. William Glasser, (2003:2). He thinks that (...) problems occur in all teaching situations and need to be handled effectively and defends that, "When dealing with discipline problems, teachers should have two goals: first, to stop the unwanted or disruptive behavior; second, (...) to teach students to control their own behavior." This is a good tool for preventing discipline problems "No matter how well a teacher knows the subject matter or how well he or she can teach, a teacher who cannot manage a class is finished!" Howard Seeman. Therefore, the most important action an effective teacher takes at the beginning of the year is creating a climate for learning.

Clear Expectations and Enforcing Class Rules: I agree with Mckenzie when he states that the teacher should set the state well in advance by clearing expectations and applying other techniques creating the right environment. He invites teachers, together with cadets, to clarify expectations for classroom behavior. He believes that: If the teacher creates expectations, rather than rules, even the language is more conducive to positive behavior. For him, it is important to decide with the students what constitutes proper behavior

rather than dictating to them what the rules will be. The teacher should encourage students to reflect on the causes of behavior problems in their classrooms. This procedure creates a sense of ownership among them. In fact, Mackenzie's approach leads students to be more responsible because students adore be part of teachers planning and the results are usually positive.

Creating the Right Classroom Environment: Concerning classroom environment, it is proved a healthy environment in the classroom, helps prevent discipline problems. Mackenzie believes that planning and creating the right environment in the classroom prevents discipline problems. He proposes the following:

Resist the temptation to react immediately and try to give calm and rational responses to misbehavior. This way students will react positively to something that makes sense to them than something that was said out of frustration or anger.

Classroom Management: Effective and classroom management is a matter of skill and design and a good tool for preventing discipline problems. Charles J. Smith, Sr., Ph.D. in *School Discipline and Classroom Management: A Must for Improved Instruction* states that successful teachers are those who knowingly make decisions that are based on sound principles and these principles involve three central concepts that are essential to the principles of classroom management: norm, power and awareness. However, all teachers even those with effective classroom management plans have encountered occasional discipline incidents. Most of the times, discipline problems exist because of teachers' inability to prevent unnecessary disruptions or correct problems when they arise.

Therefore, in order to manage discipline problems, the teacher should:

- Provide students with lesson plans that do not make students feel unmotivated
- Engage school- and community-wide commitment to establishing and maintaining appropriate student behavior in school and at school –sponsored level events.
- Work on getting to know students as individuals; take an interest in their plans and activities.

- Work to improve communication with an involvement of parents and community members in instruction, extra curricular activities, and governance.

After preventing and managing we would suggest general recommendations, some of them suggested by conceited researchers at the school at classroom level but, at the same time, focusing on teachers and students recommendations.

Prevention:

1. Incentive awards for good behavior do not only focus on misbehavior but we give incentives and praise for good behavior, “make it appealing to be good”.
2. School rules should be written and shared with all.
2. All players should see themselves as important to the process of solving discipline problems. Give everyone involved a specific role.
3. Have meetings to encourage open dialogue.
4. Make sure students understand their responsibilities and consequences for non compliance

Management:

1. Teachers who serve as guidance counselor and are trained in avoiding “ miscalls”
2. Clear and specific punishment for misbehavior
3. Good Classroom Management
4. Teachers who are well informed and good role models
5. A system of response and recourse where students and teachers alike feel heard and responded to in a just manner.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the recommendations given by students and teachers, I would like to suggest the following:

Classroom level:

1. Enforce classroom rules promptly, consistently and equitable from the very first day of school. establish clear rules and procedures and instruct students in how to follow them.
2. Maintain a brisk instructional pace and make smooth transitions between activities
3. Monitor classroom activities and give students feedback and reinforcement regarding their behavior.
4. Create opportunity for students (particularly those with behavioral problems) to experience success in their learning and social behavior.
5. Make use of humor, when suitable, to stimulate student interest or reduce classroom tensions
6. Remove distracting materials (athletic equipment, art materials, etc) from view when instruction is in progress.
7. Intervene quickly and do not allow behavior that violates school or classroom rules to go unchecked.
8. Instruct students with behavioral problems in self control skills; teach them how to observe their own behavior, talk themselves through appropriate behavior patterns, and reinforce themselves for succeeding.
9. Identify those students who seem to lack a sense of personal efficacy and work to help them achieve an internal locus of control.
10. Make students feel they are part of the school and that their contributions are helpful.
11. Work on to get students as individuals; take an interest in their plans and activities.
12. Intervene quickly when discipline problems arise and do not allow behavior that violates school or classroom rules to go unchecked.
13. As appropriate, develop reinforcement schedules and use these with misbehaving students.

School Level:

1. Bring parents to school and make them feel part of it by promoting activities that make them feel closer to the school community.
2. Provide the school with an internal regulation and discuss the rules with students before approving it.
3. With input from students, develop clear behavioral rules and procedures and make this known to all stakeholders in the school, including parents and community.
4. Make use of counseling services for students with behavioral ; counseling should seek the cause of the misconduct and assist students in developing needed skills to behave appropriately.
5. Collaborate with misbehaving students on developing and signing contingency contracts to help stimulate behavioral change
6. Place misbehaving students in peer tutoring arrangements; have them serve either as tutors or tutees, as appropriate.

V. CONCLUSION

The objective of this work was not aimed at telling people what they already know nor to provide a packaged recipe to solve problems. Rather it was to offer ways in which to help teachers not only identify, prevent and deal with discipline problems, but also challenge us to think seriously about the issue of discipline as it affects the student, family, school and society in general. Discipline needs to be well-defined where all involved have a strong point of reference; however, the work begins when we personally challenge ourselves to deal with the problem in an effective and systematic way.

As I began to write my conclusion, I looked back at my research question and asked myself the follow-up question: what is our desired outcome? If all of the student's, teacher's and general recommendations provided in this report were put into action, what would our schools look like? Would all of our students be well-behaved? Would there no longer be a need to tackle the problem of discipline? Would our society be free of discipline problems? Would the bus ride to school be full of well mannered children and the teacher-talk in the faculty lounge full of praise for even the most challenging student? ... most probably not.

If you the reader take away anything from this paper, it should be the understanding that discipline is a natural process that is part and parcel of the education system. Although it is a constant issue in the schools, it is not confined to the hallways of our schools. The problem of managing discipline is found in all three spaces: family and society as well as school. The tendency towards disorder is natural and therefore preventive and management strategies will always be necessary. But even the best of preventive measures will not stamp out discipline problems. What we are searching for are effective ways to create an environment of awareness for positive incentives, responsibility for one's own actions and an atmosphere of trust where students, teachers and all concerned can foster a relationship of mutual respect as we set rules, abide by those rules and

encourage everyone to contribute in a positive way to their school environment. This is the end-result to which this paper has been written.

Recently I had the distinct privilege to accept the position of School Director at Escola Secundaria Polivalente. This position not only brings the many challenges of school administration but it also brings me full circle in school partnership relationships. Now knowing what it is to be an administrator, teacher, parent and student, I can only hope that these different perspectives assist me in spearheading significant change in working with all involved to make a difference at my school. ...and you? What recommendations would you put in place at your school to get your school up and running towards a healthy and safer school environment?

This paper recommends that: *schools work hard to enter into a meaningful relationship with students, teachers, parents and administration.* We need to bridge the gap between school and family. This can be done by planning and implementing activities and programs to promote positive behavior and community service. The goals of these activities would be to help students become more responsible and pro-active in both the school and home learning environment. Instead of students bringing their problems from home to school, they would be encouraged to take strategies learned in school to solve their problems at home.

Secondly, *it is imperative that each school has its own internal rules and regulations.* These written guidelines should define discipline and identify the roles and responsibilities of students, teachers and the administration. These guidelines must be openly shared and recognized as the school's response in handling discipline matters. These guidelines should serve as a basis of dialogue, training, and awareness for the school community.

Thirdly, *teachers and administrators should be trained in correctly identifying discipline problems in order to avoid miscalls.* In addition we must put in place effective strategies for behavior correction. This training should lead to the position of a guidance counselor;

one who could assist the school in identifying discipline problems and assist students with resolving their emotional and behavioral problems. This training should also be extended to parents through ongoing Parent Teacher Association meetings.

Lastly, *there are many issues in this area still to be researched*. We recommend that research be continued to build from this present research and further develop initiatives to create a strong school community. Research topics could include:

1. The role of the school guidance counselor in managing discipline. Research could be done on the feasibility of placing guidance counselors in the schools. What would be their profile, main objectives and desired outcome?
2. Behavior Incentive Programs Too often are we focus on what is going wrong and we overlook what is good and effective in our school community. We are quick to seek punishment for the misbehaved students but fail to reward those students who are striving for excellence. What would a Behavior Incentive Program look like? What would be the objectives and how would it be planned and implemented?
3. Activities to promote open dialogue between students, parents and school. What are the innovative strategies that we have yet to put in place which would assist us in opening meaningful dialogue? What are the resources that are waiting to be tapped that would serve the school community in better managing discipline problems, among others?

In conclusion, discipline problems will not go away; therefore, the complex nature of our society requires that teachers develop a vast arsenal of human skills to assist students in determining their own behavior. Teaching will become more complex and require more highly skilled and dedicated workers. Therefore, we as teachers in the profession must begin to focus our attention to the major concern of helping to “establish a healthy environment for learning and living”.

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VII. APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1- Teacher and student's surveys

APPENDIX 2 – Ten Tips for Classroom and Management

APPENDIX 3 – Tips for Creating a Peaceful Classroom

APPENDIX 4- Teacher Talk – What's your Classroom Management Profile?

APPENDIX 5- Techniques for Better Classroom Discipline

APPENDIX 6- Dos and Don'ts

APPENDIX 7- Classroom Rules for Teachers

APPENDIX 8- Violência no Liceu Domingos Ramos

APPENDIX 9- Thugs Criam Pânico no Liceu Regina Silva

APPENDIX 10- Teacher and Classroom Management Self Assessment